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THE EASTERN DANGER FROM A BRITISH VIEW-POINT.*

MR. EVERARD COTES, an English journalist resident for a long time in India, shows in his new book a breadth and depth of insight, a calmly dispassionate and judicial attitude of mind and a culture of style which will indicate to American readers, to whom his name is doubtless chiefly familiar through the charming books which his wife has written, that he has unusual training. The volume itself is the fruit of an extended journey through China, Manchuria, Korea and Japan in the summer of 1906. He says: "Events of to-day in the Far East are posters for to-morrow"; and he gives the reader "some of the inscriptions which these posters bear." He is convinced "the new situation, so immediate and dramatic," plainly threatens "Anglo-Saxon interests"; but he is by no means an alarmist. The dangers he sees are economic, and those which grow out of the influence upon industrial development of the political and racial changes now transpiring in the Far East, or in inception. He writes for British readers, and in the final outcome his view is that "the potentialities of India as the coadjutor of Great Britain in the future of the Far East can hardly be overestimated"; but what he has to say possesses a timely and thoroughly practical interest for us in America as well. Current events, and those which may be anticipated in the next few years, both political and industrial, remind us once more that we shall be foolish to try to shut our eyes to the new "Eastern Question"; and this, not because the Philippines and Hawaii are part of the United States, but that year by year the whole world is being knit together closer and closer by indissoluble bonds with a rapidity which, most likely, we utterly fail to appreciate. The Tartar Wall is long ago obsolete in China; the political wall which the founders of the American Republic thought had been set up to isolate their country from the rest of the world is being breached in its foundations in the inevitable march of events. A hundred years ago it was both easy and obviously of advantage to "avoid entangling alliances"; the ease of it has apparently gone, the propriety of it in the future may not be so obvious. We can

* "Signs and Portents in the Far East." By Everard Cotes. With thirty-five illustrations. London: Methuen & Co. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

"The Asiatic Danger in the Colonies." By L. E. Neame. London: George Routledge & Sons, Limited. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co.

hardly yet have begun to realize the enormous potentiality of racial intermingling and change which is inherent in the rapid development of transportation and communication due to steam and electricity. Looking back for fifty years we may get a perspective, but even then no assured vantage-ground from which to look certainly into the changes of the coming half-century in which the harvest of the recent past is to be reaped. At all events, if we in America do not set ourselves to realize that we are more surely, year by year, in the world and of the world, we shall at last have our eyes opened with pain and tribulation. To us, therefore, as well as to Mr. Cotes's fellow countrymen, there is much in the book of timely and weighty significance.

Through these far-Eastern countries, that are now for the first time looming so largely on the horizon of Western lands, he has travelled with keenly observant eyes, a thoroughly trained mind to assimilate and draw conclusions from what he sees, and a very unusual power of sympathy for the view-point of alien races. The treatment of his subject is conspicuously, and convincingly, temperate.

In China he notes that development along modern lines has been in progress for five years past, and makes many suggestive comments. About a year ago a highly intelligent officer in the Imperial Chinese army said to the writer of this review, "The modern movement has been going on for the last five years. If the Emperor can have his way, you will see China make more rapid progress than Japan has ever done." Mr. Cotes, however, does not think Western ideas have as yet taken a grip of the Chinese imagination; but that "the point of assimilation in methods, and even in morals, will no doubt some day come, and when it does we may look for a tremendous accompaniment." He saw a number of government factories turning out effective modern weapons, and noticeable drilling of troops; he says "power only, not will, is lacking for the complete expulsion of the European," but does not appear to anticipate any considerable increase of military strength in the near future. The hostile feeling is extending to the Japanese as well, "his failure to hand back Korea to China is confirming his old unpopularity"; and many things are noted which quite clearly indicate a significant waning of Japan's prestige and a reaction of Chinese racial pride to the old-time hostility towards the little Islanders.

As to Korea: "To-day, however, the Korean hates the Japanese far more bitterly than he ever hated the other invader"—the Russian. The Koreans complain of injustice, oppression, brutality and inequality before the law, at the hands of their new masters. "At the moment, Korea is in a critical position. . . . The Japanese have made a most unfortunate start with their administration of the country." And this appears to be abundantly confirmed from all sources, and will recall, to the readers of the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, Mr. William T. Ellis's picturesque details in his very interesting paper in the October issue of last year.

As to Japan itself, Mr. Cotes thinks the period of rapid development has for the time being culminated. "Japan has made her grand national effort, and must now rest to refit and recuperate. . . . Ten years of peace and careful economy are essential . . . everywhere there is a sharply defined need of money." He finds much to admire, but after all reaches the conclusion that the Japanese "must pursue the road of progress a very great deal further before he can overtake the white man at his best." It seems reasonably clear that the Western world need not greatly fear military aggression in the near future; Japan will not be in any good position to wage war for the next decade, and by that time if the comb of the Japanese cock needs cutting it is something more than possible that China may be relied on to do it—and take back the Shantung Peninsula, Manchuria and Korea! As for industrial aggression, it seems to concern Europe far more than America at this time. In the end, of course, those countries best fitted to produce will win out, whether East or West.

There is, to be sure, an ominous plenitude of good and extraordinarily cheap labor in the Far East awaiting modern conditions and opportunities of employment, and standing as a menace to Western industrial supremacy. It seems likely—perhaps inevitable, and no doubt desirable from the standpoint of the world's welfare, however different the Western view may be—that the East in increasing measure will supply its own wants by its own labor; and the effect of that will be, as always, to stimulate the demands of labor for a better wage and a higher standard of living. In the end, perhaps not very remotely, we may doubtless look for trades-unions or similar organization

of the proletariat of the teeming East, bringing in their train the domestic economic disturbance which adds so heavily to the cost of production and reduces the power of aggressive competition with the outside world. Whether it be trades-unionism or some other expression of the advancing demands of labor, it can probably be relied on eventually to adjust the economic disparity with which the Orient now threatens Occidental races. And meantime, increasingly profitable home employment for Oriental workmen minimizes the danger to other countries of an industrial invasion by ill-paid Eastern proletaries. On the whole, we need have no fears, unless the white race is inferior to the yellow; if that be so, we must grow better or go under.

Apropos of recent manifestations of Japanese sensitiveness regarding infraction of treaty rights at San Francisco, the following passages are the more significant coming from one who is looking at the Japanese with a friendly eye:

"Japan is accused of breaking faith" in Korea "and in Manchuria with the European Powers. By treaty she is bound to respect local autonomy, and to give foreigners the same opportunity . . . as her own subjects enjoy. I have been told by men whose honesty cannot be doubted that this is not being done. European and American merchants and mining engineers find their operations hampered in many ways."

"Japan is . . . no place for the European who has to make his living. I refer not so much to European experts in Japanese employ, who are rapidly disappearing, but to the European merchants who do business on their own account. . . . Ostensibly, they are protected by treaty and given absolute equality of opportunity with their Japanese competitors. Practically, they are hampered upon all sides. They find the Japanese official in league with the Japanese merchant to undersell them. Regulations are rigidly enforced when they operate to the foreigner's disadvantage, but are read in an altogether different spirit where Japanese merchants are concerned."

"Complaints are loud-voiced. Japanese traders have been allowed to import their goods into Manchuria *via* Dalny, where they have paid no duty, for a full year, during which Europeans could only enter *via* Neuchwang, where import duties had to be paid. This appears to be now under rectification; but the rates upon the railways in the new territory, which are all in Japanese hands, are still complained of as designed to favor the Japanese at the expense of the foreigner. . . . Difficulty is not confined to Manchuria and Korea. The European resents the position to which he finds himself relegated in Japan, where he is welcome only if he is a tourist with money to spend in the country, and is hampered at every point if he tries to make a living for himself."

In view of this sort of evidence from a friend of Japan, one

wonders whether the wrongs of a few school-children, a few keepers of intelligence-offices and restaurants, in the turbulent city of our Pacific coast, are not greatly overbalanced by what has been taking place for some time past in Korea, Manchuria and Japan itself; and whether our friends of the Island Kingdom are not a little disposed to view treaty obligations on the turkey-and-buzzard principle.

"Signs and Portents in the Far East" is so fair-minded and broad-minded, so acute in its observation and so well informed in its treatment of the subject, that it is of special value to American readers at the present time.

Mr. Neame's modest little volume deals with the commercial danger of allowing Asiatics to engage in trade in South Africa or Australasia because they are better fitted to survive competition than the white trader and undersell him in his own field. "The Asiatic invariably obtains a grip of the country he enters. . . . The Asiatic immigrant is . . . driving out the white trader." That is the burden of the Colonial complaint which is making all sorts of trouble for the Home Government. The Colonies want Asiatic labor, but strictly under time contracts which will oblige the coolie to be deported after his time expires; they will not allow him to remain because he will beat the white man at his own trade. They want the principle of "high protection" carried to its ultimate and final extreme. Perhaps they are right; but meantime Mr. Neame's book shows that the white rulers of South Africa are imposing far more rigorous and unjust conditions of trade upon resident Asiatic traders than Japan is accused of. And these Asiatics, thus forced to compete under laws expressly designed to "hamper" and even to oppress them, are not all foreigners, but chiefly fellow subjects of the British Empire from India. The embarrassment already brought upon British rule in India by this state of affairs is readily conceivable and is likely to increase.

Altogether, the affairs of the Far East in the years lying just ahead of us seem destined to play a very interesting and possibly an exciting part. It is not inconceivable that world changes, as yet quite unforeseen, may grow out of them; and there is no probability that we in America shall be able to hold ourselves entirely aloof.

JOSEPH HORNOR COATES.